

him to the gate and beyond. Outside, the highway rose steeply, and the lame boy took it with difficulty. Then Hubert, as strong as a young gladiator, suddenly slung Kenneth on his shoulders pickaback. Before they were out of sight they had reached such a pitch of intimacy that Kenneth was kicking and spurring Hubert, while Hubert was threatening to throw Kenneth into the ditch.

So charmed was Hubert with his new acquaintance that it was dusk before he returned, and the children's supper was over. Hubert had reached the dignity of dining with his parents at seven o'clock. At dinner he was full of enthusiasm about Kenneth, and pronounced everything about him to be either bully or bang-up, and generally both. Kenneth knew the baseball score, and had strong predilections for the Giants, which was also Hubert's favorite team. He had read all the boys' books going, and had that day been admitted to the high school.

WHEN dinner was over, and Hubert had gone away to his books, Mowbray and Elizabeth went into the cozy, old-fashioned library, where every evening they had a quiet hour to themselves, an hour that was to both of them a little glimpse of Heaven's own blue sky. In it Mowbray forgot his law offices in the town, and Elizabeth laid aside the problems that confront the mother of five children, however well-to-do in mind, body, and estate.

Sometimes they talked, and sometimes a silence prevailed that was more intimate than speech. Elizabeth had her fine needlework and a book; Mowbray had his cigar and the evening newspaper.

Tonight, however, Mowbray was not only silent, but abstracted. He sat for half an hour gazing into the golden fire, and then, rising, opened a desk at the end of the room, and sat there for another half-hour. That desk contained the only closed gate between Mowbray and Elizabeth. In it were the few relics of Mowbray's first marriage,—a bundle of letters, some small trinkets and mementos.

Mowbray, in the early days of their marriage, had given Elizabeth the bare outlines of his first marriage,—two happy years, and then the young wife going to England to visit her relatives, and to show them her firstborn, a beautiful boy, her sudden death abroad, followed by that of the child. Elizabeth had then said to Mowbray:

"I have no curiosity about your first marriage: it is the love story of another woman, and is sacred to her memory. I have no wish and no right to know it."

Yet, as things reveal themselves, Elizabeth knew, without being told, that the desk was the mausoleum of a dead passion. On certain anniversaries Mowbray, with the fine loyalty that was part of his nature, would sit at this desk, reading over the letters, and looking at the memorials of a dead past. At these times Elizabeth would not seem to notice it, even by leaving the room. But she was careful not to thrust herself on Mowbray's attention, and always appeared deeply absorbed in her book or her work. She was the sanest and soundest of women, and far above the meanness of jealousy; but at these times a faint shadow fell upon her radiant happiness.

Tonight Mowbray was concentrated upon the contents of the desk, and looked up with surprise when the clock chimed half past nine. He glanced round, and found Elizabeth was gone.

The Chorister

FROM the hour that Kenneth first looked into the happy eyes of the children in the old garden a singular bond seemed formed between them. Hubert adopted his new friend as chum-in-chief. The two little girls adored the boy for his singing. Harold, a reading boy, found that Kenneth loved reading too, and had been in many places, and could tell about them. Little Esther promptly named Kenneth "my Kenny," and trotted to meet him as fast as her short legs would carry her. The boy himself underwent a quick and subtle change. His eyes lost their look of appealing sadness, and he suddenly became as merry as a sandpiper.

Mowbray and Elizabeth had watched closely this new element in the lives of their children; but from the first no fault could be found with Kenneth. This good opinion was confirmed by Mary Reilly, the charwoman, who had a weekly job to clear up the clutter made by five active, merry, healthy children. Mary Reilly also did odd jobs for the newcomer in the cottage.

"That there boy," explained Mary Reilly, brandishing her mop and almost knocking over her water pail in her emphasis as she talked to Elizabeth, "is a gentleman, Mum, and I, Mary Reilly, the widdy of Sergeant Reilly of the Seventh Cavalry, Mum, says so, Mum. So perlit to his aunt, a pullin' her chair out at dinner ivery day the Lord sends, and tryin' to help, and he so lame and, no bigger than a twelve-year-old boy, although he is all of sixteen! And a takin' off his hat to me, Mum, Mary Reilly, Mum, and sayin' he thinks more of me bekase I'm a soldier's widdy, and a singin' like a fallen angel, Mum, to the tinklingest old pianer you ever heard, Mum!"

ONE afternoon a week later Elizabeth, walking along the Rosedale road, met Hayden the choirmaster, a thin, irritable, conscientious man, a master of music, and with all the troubles of a musician trying to conduct a boy choir. Hayden stopped Elizabeth Mowbray in the road to complain of Hubert.

"One of the best voices in the choir," he said crossly; "but anything and everything keeps him away from the practising, and Easter only two months off! I wish you would give him a hauling over the coals, Mrs. Mowbray."

"I will," promptly answered Elizabeth; "but please remember, Mr. Hayden, that Hubert is at the restless age, and such a vigorous fellow that it is hard to make him sit still out of school."

"All the mothers have some excuse of the sort," replied Hayden, still unappeased.

Elizabeth, however, had a sop for Cerberus. "There's a boy, Kenneth Gray, who has come to live close by," she said, "who sings most beautifully. He came into

nized Elizabeth, who introduced herself gracefully, and also Hayden. Mrs. Gray responded, and Elizabeth discerned, as Mowbray had done, the gentlewoman in eclipse. Mrs. Gray thanked Elizabeth for her kindness to Kenneth; but there was a chilliness in her courteous words which Elizabeth felt.

There was no chilliness in Hayden's manner, however, when a good voice was to be had. He explained the modest monthly sum he could expend on the boy choir, and asked to try Kenneth's voice. At that moment Kenneth was seen limping past the little window, and he came into the room. His politeness, his knowledge of what to do with his seedy hat, his shy, worshipping gaze fixed on Elizabeth, impressed Hayden well.

The choirmaster took a choir book out of his pocket and, sitting down to the wheezy old piano, played the accompaniments, while Kenneth sang, with beautiful precision and a charming voice, the music he had never before seen. Hayden wanted to clasp to his heart the boy who could sing at sight. The matter of the small salary was quickly arranged, and Kenneth was to report at the choir practising the next afternoon. The choirmaster was proud of his Easter music, and felt like a prospector who has suddenly come upon a pocket of gold in very unpromising earth. The finding of Kenneth brought with it another blessing to the badgered choirmaster; for Hubert immediately became punctual at the practising. The distance to the church was considerable, and Kenneth walked with difficulty; so Hubert would sling the lame boy on his back and trudge along the road merrily, and their boyish laughter, and their ragtime songs, which to Hubert were the classics of music, would ring out in the soft, spring air. It seemed as if a place in Hubert's heart had been left open for this boy, poor and lame and alone, but with a sturdy courage, a sunny spirit, inhabiting his stunted body. More than that, there seemed a place waiting for him in the beautiful circle of children, whose happy voices mingled with the music of the birdlings in the old garden, and whose sweet faces were of kin to the blooms that smiled in the sunlight of the springtime.

IN the month that followed Kenneth's advent something disturbing came into the clear blue sky of Elizabeth Mowbray's happy life. Mowbray appeared to be more restless and abstracted than Elizabeth had ever known him in their fourteen years of married life. Often, in the quiet evenings in the library, he would sit before the desk in the far corner, never suspecting that Elizabeth knew what the desk contained. Sometimes he would rise in the night when he thought Elizabeth was sleeping, and walk nervously and stealthily about the room. Again he would go down into the library below, and Elizabeth surmised readily enough what his employment there was.

She spoke no word; but her heart uttered a silent cry, for there is always a Voice of the Silence. Never was a woman freer from the meanness of jealousy,—that frightful passion of which Amiel says, "Jealousy is a terrible thing; it is the last expression of a despotic and exacting nature." But there was a veil between her and Mowbray. It could not be of the heart,—Elizabeth laughed aloud at that thought,—still it was a veil, vague but not imperceptible. She watched and waited with exquisite patience: not doubting; only waiting. "The lotos lies deep; one cannot hasten the blooming of the divine flower."

Alone

THE late winter slipped into the early spring. Nature, as if repenting of her early sunshine, grew morose, and the days were dark and cold, and snow covered the building of the old garden.

There was ice enough to skate on on the lake, and Hubert took the opportunity of breaking through, and wrenching his ankle. This kept him indoors, while a March blizzard came to town.

On the fourth day of the storm Mary Reilly plowed her way through the drifts to the Mowbray house. She brought surprising news. Mrs. Gray had suddenly disappeared the night before the blizzard, leaving Kenneth alone in the little cottage. All that Mary Reilly could get out of the boy was that his aunt had left a letter for him, with some money, and the rent of the cottage was paid six months in advance. When telling this tale to Elizabeth, Mary Reilly exploded violently, flourishing her mop with

Continued on page 18

